



Ms Jane Howlett MP

House of Assembly

Date: 21 May 2024

Electorate: Lyons

[3.51 p.m.]

Ms HOWLETT (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) (Inaugural) - Madam Speaker, it is a great honour for me to rise today and deliver my inaugural speech to this House, not only as a newly elected member for Lyons, but also as Minister for Primary Industries and Water, and Minister for Racing.

I acknowledge the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and as the continuing custodians of this land, seas and skies. I value and pay my respects to the history, culture, strength and enduring nature of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community and its elders past and present.

First, I congratulate Premier Jeremy Rockliff on a historic fourth term of government and I am so proud to be part of his team and a member of this 51st Parliament. Congratulations to all elected members in this House, in particular my new Liberal colleagues Rob Fairs, Eric Abetz and returning colleague Jacque Petrusma, and the new member for Prosser in the other place, Kerry Vincent.

This election focused on the issues affecting us right now, such as cost of living, health and housing. That is why we developed our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future and that is what we are delivering.

I am so thrilled and grateful for the support I received in the state election from the people of Lyons. I will work hard every day to represent them and the people of Tasmania.

Madam Speaker, this is my second inaugural speech, and it would be remiss of me not to thank the people of Prosser, who trusted me to be their member in the Legislative Council for the past six years. Happily, the seat of Prosser is contained within the boundaries of my new electorate of Lyons, so I will be able to continue to serve this community. Just as importantly, I can absolutely vouch for the new member for Prosser, Kerry Vincent, a man I have worked closely with during my time as a local member and someone I am proud to call a trusted friend.

In my time as a member for Prosser, I met many people from different walks of life in differing circumstances. I worked hard to help every one of them. I pay tribute to them as the good-natured, hardworking Tasmanians that they are and who have continued to make this wonderful state what it is today.

There are also those who have touched a special place in my heart. One of those is Montana Marshall, one of the bravest individuals I have ever met. Montana had two lung replacements. I had the privilege of getting to know her while we sat together in hospital many, many times. I watched as she made scrunchies on a sewing machine,

which we raised money for, and I experienced the joy as she sold them to many of the members of the Triabunna community. I wear mine with pride. Unfortunately, she lost her battle in 2020 when she was in her early teens. You will never be forgotten, Montana. Knowing you has made me such a better person.

For me now, my responsibility is to the seat of Lyons, its residents and the broader people of Tasmania. For those people of Lyons who I am yet to meet, I am looking forward to meeting you and just as importantly, representing you.

I have been part of the Lyons community for the majority of my life, being educated at Campania District High School. I spent most of my youth working on our family farm at Campania with my father. If I was not on the farm, I was travelling around our state competing in equestrian events, accompanied by an extremely dedicated and supportive mother. My parents have and continue to play an important role in my life. They have provided me with a solid grounding of what it truly is to give back to one's community.

My father Colin served as the long-term and dedicated mayor of the Southern Midlands Council. Most evenings discussions around the dinner table would be centred on what was going on in the local community. My dad was always there for everyone and tried to find solutions to every problem. He held strong Liberal Party values, which is where the foundation for my own Liberal Party values came from. Importantly, he taught me that we should always try to find solutions to help those in need. My dad's passion for his community was the primary inspiration for my own political ambitions, but I did take an interesting pathway to get to this place.

Leaving school after completing year 10, I commenced and completed a trade certificate in hairdressing. At the age of 20, I built my first house in Brighton and lived there for many years. My first foray into business was a start-up out of my garage in Brighton when I was 20. I took a risk and started up a distribution company. I was a salesperson during the day and packed the stock orders at night out of my garage. Thankfully, the baby monitor from the garage reached the house, as I would work day and night. It was extremely cold during the winter, and I would often be found in a balaclava, as some of my friends in the Chamber have witnessed.

The reason for my persistence in making this business succeed was a necessity. I simply had to work hard to make ends meet. My then husband left, and I was faced with the many challenges that come with being a single mother. However, I did not let that stop me. During this time, I also went to university as a mature-age student, but with the competing demands of motherhood and running a business I could not find the time to complete my commerce degree.

After 10 challenging yet successful years, I sold my business and was invited to join the multinational company Procter and Gamble, where I spent five enjoyable, very rewarding years. Fortunately for me, this multinational company had a strong belief in investing in its people and I was able to undertake executive development courses and travel internationally, which allowed me to extend my skill set.

At the age of 30 and during the 2006 Lyons state election campaign, I met Sergei, who would later become my husband, my best friend and father to our daughter Penelope and son Dimitri.

I was fortunate to grow up in a household that understood not only the value of hard work, but also the value of giving back to one's community. With dad serving on the council from an early age, I learned to appreciate that very old saying, 'All politics is local, as well as the need to put in the hard yards if you really, truly want to make a positive difference'.

In my first election campaign in the 2006 state election, my only previous political experience was helping my dad during his council campaigns. I campaigned the way dad had showed me in a true grassroots fashion. I went from door to door, not to talk to people but rather to listen to them. Eighteen years later in the 2024 state election campaign, that is exactly how I did it again.

I stood for the Liberal Party then and now because it is a party that reflects my values. Those values are hard work and reward for that hard effort and individual achievement, the freedom for each individual to better themselves and to help make our society a much better place.

I learned a great deal in the six years I was a member of the Legislative Council, and I am grateful for the friendships and the networks I have built during this time. During that time, I had the privilege of being a minister. It was a time when, as minister and as a local member, I was able to help navigate businesses and families through that huge time of uncertainty: the COVID pandemic.

There have been some pretty tough times since I made my first inaugural speech in the Legislative Council. My father has battled cancer and is still battling that fight, showing the strength and resilience that everyone who knows my dad would recognise. He is incredible. In 2020, we lost my dear godson, Dante, due to mental health issues. He was such a beautiful, incredible soul who lost his struggle with something that is so often hidden, and something that affects so many of our young people in Tasmania. I think of him every day. His mother, Melina, and his sisters, Francesca and Lavinia, are here with us today. Melina has been my friend of 33 years, and I am proud to support her in her movement, Dante Rocks, a walk in memory of Dante and to promote awareness for mental health to be held in October this year.

My own family went through its darkest times two years ago, when my brother Craig passed away a day before his 58th birthday after a very brave battle at the Whittle Ward in Hobart. This week is palliative care week. I pay tribute to the nurses and palliative care workers who bring so much more than just clinical skill: they bring compassion, comfort, support and empathy when Tasmanians and their loved ones really need it the most.

I lost my only brother; my parents lost their only son, and you are not supposed to bury your children. Not a day goes by when we do not think of him. I thank those people who wrap their arms around my parents and our family: Tracy and Gordon Chessell, and David and Alison Pearce, who are here in the Chamber today. Thank you so much for your ongoing support.

Sandra Henderson, Michael Long, John Tucker, Asimina Rigas, Kirsha Kaechele, Michelle Mamarcus, Helen Quinn, Melina, Laura, Janneke, Rachel, Mary and Pris: we are forever grateful for your support and ongoing support.

On a happy note, in the last six years, Sergei and I have become grandparents. I am affectionately called GG by Theodore, who I know is watching at home right now. He has just turned three, and he has brought immense joy into our lives. I am so proud of what wonderful parents Britney and Dimitri have become and the successful small business that they have created and grown in Queensland. We love you so very much and we just wish that you would move home.

The decision for me to change houses and run for the seat of Lyons in the House of Assembly was one that my husband and I discussed with my parents and in-laws, Penny and Bruce. However, it was our then 15-year-old daughter who, one Sunday afternoon, presented me and a great friend with a very long list of all the reasons why I should do it. The key reason she gave was that I will continue to have the ability to make a difference, to be a role model for girls and for women, and to make sure that a Rockliff Liberal government was returned. From you, Pea, I continue to take my cues, and I love you. Penelope, you have grown to become a resilient, empathetic, intelligent, caring and considerate young woman, and I know that whatever path you choose, you will take it on with passion.

I also take this opportunity to thank my extremely dedicated and hardworking campaign team. I could not have done it without your help and the assistance of so many people. To the Liberal Party campaign director, Pete Coulson, thank you for all of your help and guidance.

To Sergei, Dad, Mum, Brad Stansfield, Sandy Witterson, Becher Townshend, Jonathan Heather, Matt Hockman, Gemma Milling, Trent Hasson, Sheree Minnikin-Smith, Ed Boutchard, Tony Smith, Neil Edwards, my very dear friend Ron Riley, Kerry Vincent, and Jan Elsey: thank you for your advice, your hard work and your loyal support.

To my Sorell girls, led by Gemma - and there are far too many to name - thank you for keeping me grounded, and thank you for your continued friendship and all that you did for me during my campaign.

To those businesses and individuals who had containers - plenty of those - trailers and posters on their properties and businesses: thank you from the bottom of my heart.

To the many Liberal Party members from Lyons and Prosser who doorknocked, letterboxed and made phone call after phone call for me: thank you for being such supportive people.

I thank my sisters, Michelle and Robyn and their families, and my wonderful in-laws, Penny and Bruce. To the rest of our family and friends: Thank you. To my husband, Sergei, son, Dimitri, and daughter, Penelope: thank you for believing in me and supporting me to run again. Finally, to my parents: thank you.

Thank you to my new team: Vince, Daisy, Caroline, Chris, Luke, James, Heather, Sharee, Trudy, Nicki and Anna, who is starting very soon. You have been such a wonderful support and guide to me and have set me up to succeed in my new role. Thank you for all of your help so far.

To Ned, Lee, Brett, Jess, Carol, and the Premier's Office team: thank you also for your valued support.

To Jason and the team at NRE Tasmania; Gene, Andrew, Dave, and the team at Tasracing, and Kate and Andrew, the team from Tasmanian Irrigation: thank you for your incoming briefings and for the subsequent information provided, and for your ongoing patience, support and advice.

Madam Speaker, as part of Jeremy Rockliff's Liberal government, I am getting on with the job and delivering our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future in Primary Industries, Water and Racing. I want to keep working hard to make Tasmania the best place in Australia to do business.

I know firsthand how important agriculture is to so many regions across Tasmania. We have proud farming families that have lived and worked on the land in Tasmania for many generations, and I will always back our farmers. We will keep working hard together to reach our target of a farmgate value of \$10 billion by 2050.

I grew up around racing; it has always been part of my family life. I know how important racing is to the families, communities, local jobs and businesses that it supports, but I also know that its reputation has taken a hit. As Racing minister, I want to fix that. I want to rebuild trust and restore faith in the racing industry across all three codes and see them thrive. That is why, today, I tabled the Racing Regulation Integrity Bill 2024 and Racing Regulation and Integrity (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2024. This is the first step in delivering our 100-day-plan commitment to provide the Tasmanian racing industry with a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose model for regulation and for integrity. This is very important legislation and will represent the most significant reform in decades for the industry.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I put on the record my sincere congratulations to you on your election as Speaker and thank you for your continued service in this role.

To the people of Lyons: you have put your faith in me, and I will repay you by working hard every single day for you across all parts of the electorate and here in this place. I will not let you down.